

I also want you to think about the big issues. What do you think the Federal Government ought to be doing? What is the role of the Federal Government as we move into the 21st century? How important is it to reduce the budget deficit as opposed to dealing with, let's say, the needs of our people for more investment in education and training, and do you want us to do both?

We have problems in America that are not just political and economic, they are also social, cultural, personal problems. Some people you can't help unless they also are willing to help themselves. On the other hand, you can't just go around and point the finger at people and tell them to help themselves if they need a little help to get down the road in life.

So these are big, fundamental, basic questions that are now being debated all over again in Washington, maybe for the first time in 50 years, where we're really going back to basics. And you need to be a part of that.

If you want us to work together, instead of figuring out who's got the best 30-second attack on the other, you need to really hammer that home. You need to tell the Congressman. You need to tell the Governor. You need to tell all of us that—be clear about your difference, but don't divide the country. And let's try to do this.

Let me just close by saying this: I wouldn't trade places with anybody in any other country. I get to represent you around the world. And with all of our problems, the diversity of America, the power of our entrepreneurial system, the resources and resolve of our people, we're still in better shape for the next century than any other major country in the world. And don't you ever forget it.

And what we owe you is our best efforts not only to show you how we disagree in ways that make us look better than the other but to actually get things done that your lives and your children and your grandchildren. I'm going to do my best to do my part.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:45 p.m. at the Earl Bourdon Senior Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Louis Gendron, president, Claremont Senior Citizens Congress; Mayor Paul Lizott of Claremont, NH; and Sandy Osgood, director, Earl Bourdon Centre.

Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner for Senator John Kerry in Boston, Massachusetts

June 11, 1995

Thank you very much, Senator Kerry. Thank you for your remarks and for your example. Teresa, congratulations. I could listen to you talk all night long. Senator Kennedy got so wound up, you'd have thought he was on the ballot next week again. *[Laughter]* That's why he won. He believed in what he was doing, and that's why he won. Thank you for your spirit and your courage and your unflagging energy. Vicki, it's nice to see you. Senator Leahy, Congressman Kennedy, Congressman Markey, Congressman Meehan, my note says that Congressman Frank's here—he may not be or he may—are you here? Thank you. I want to tell you something: When nobody else will stand up, Barney will. He's got—where I come from—thank you—thank you very much. I was going to say, where I come from, that counts for something, and I've never forgotten it. Your State Chair, Joan Menard, and your wonderful, wonderful mayor, Tom Menino, I thank him so much. President Bulger, it's always good to be here with you. I have kissed the Blarney Stone, paid homage, done everything I'm supposed to do here tonight. The mayor of Galway was—is he here still? Where is he at? Anyway, I think—you know, I have to go back to Ireland, and I was wondering if you would consent to be my tour guide if I go back, give me a little direction. Speaker Flaherty, the Secretary of State Galvin, Auditor DeNucci, and Elaine Schuster, thank you so much. You are indefatigable. I am so impressed by how you keep coming back and helping us in our need, and sometimes I think we take our friends for granted, folks, and we should never do that, and I thank you.

Somebody told me my friend, Governor Dukakis is here. Is he here? Hello, Mike. Stand up. God bless you. Thank you.

I've had a rather interesting day, you know? *[Laughter]* I got up at 5:30 this morning, and it's been a hard week at the White House. We're dealing with—you know, I had to veto the rescission bill last week, and we were dealing with a lot of other things, but

overarching everything, of course, was the fate of Captain O'Grady. And it was a few days before we even knew for sure he was alive. And the whole remarkable story is beginning to come out, and of course, we're going to receive him at the White House tomorrow, and I'm looking forward to that. I know all America will be rallied and full of joy and energy.

But, anyway, I was pretty tired anyway, and I rolled out of bed at 5:30 this morning, and I hauled up to New Hampshire, and I spoke at the Dartmouth commencement and shook hands with about 1,600 students. And then I went to a reception and shook hands with a couple hundred more people. I went to Claremont, and Speaker Gingrich and I did our little town hall meeting. And I thought it was a good thing, good thing for America, and I hope you did, too. We didn't get into all of the issues, but we got into some of them, and we had a civilized way, I think, of explaining what the differences are.

What I'd like to talk about a little bit tonight is why I'm still here, and why I'm glad you're here. I was looking at Ted Kennedy give his speech so brilliantly tonight and wanting to cheer every word, and then I watched Teresa speak, and I watched John speak, and I watched John's movie, and I'm feeling sort of mellow. I got to thinking, you know, it's a miracle any of us are still around, you know, the whole complex of circumstances that brings any person to any point in time, where you're in a position to do whatever it is we're trying to do now. It's a great privilege. It's an honor.

And so I was thinking to myself, in this time when our tide is supposed to be out and theirs is supposed to be in, why would I not leave my party? Why am I proud to be here with John Kerry? Why was I proud when Ted Kennedy fought back and won? And I'd like to tell you why I am, based on what I know and what I see as your President.

We are getting back to first principles today, really getting back to first principles. Sometimes I get in trouble in Washington when I'm in these arguments with—because I forget that things I assume everybody else agrees with, a bunch of folks in the Congress

now don't agree with at all. But that's not all bad. We're going to have this huge debate.

For example, one of the issues that now is really open for debate is whether most of these social problems that Senator Kerry talked about are caused by economic and political and social factors or whether they're largely personal and cultural. That is, they can only be fixed by people just stopping doing what they're doing wrong and beginning to behave.

Now, there's some truth to that, isn't there? I mean, at one level that's just self-evident that people should behave, and if they don't do what they're supposed to do, nothing the rest of us can do will make anybody get an education or make anybody put a gun down or make anybody stay out of a gang. That is self-evident at one level.

But if you have the opportunity to do what I have done, which is to sit with Mayor Menino and his youth council, you know that it makes a whole lot of difference if somebody is trying to help these kids make the right decision. So I'm a Democrat because I believe the problems are personal and cultural, but not exclusively personal and cultural, and I think we're put on this Earth to try to help other people make the most of their lives, and we're better off when we do that, and I have learned that.

I hear these—there's a big debate in Washington about if the Government is not very good, what should we do, what is the most important thing. And some people think balancing the budget as quickly as possible is the most important thing, no matter what the consequences. I think it's an important thing; that's why we worked hard on our deficit reduction package. We got interest rates down. We got the economy coming back. We have over 6 million jobs to show for it. It is not an insignificant thing.

But it is not the only thing, because it's not as if this country's not worth anything, you know. When we invest in the education of our people, we invest in medical research, when we invest in the things that make us richer and smarter and stronger, we have assets, and they bring us things.

And I would tell you we have a budget deficit, but we also have an education deficit in this country. It is not solely a money prob-

lem, but money is related to it. One of my rules of politics is, when somebody tells you it's not a money problem, you can bet your life they're talking about somebody else's problem. [Laughter] You think about that.

Yes, there is a budget deficit, but there is an investment deficit in people, and so, let us find a way to balance the budget and still invest in the education and training and empowerment of all of these people we expect to lead us into the 21st century. That's why I am a Democrat, and I'm glad to be one, because I believe that.

If you believe, as some say now, that the Government can't do anything right and always burdens the private sector, then obviously it makes logical sense to rewrite the environmental laws of the country by letting the people who are covered by those laws, who in the course of their economic activities damage our environment, rewrite the laws. Because if you have no faith in Government at all, then you're not doing anything wrong by letting the polluters rewrite the laws. Because Government is by definition bad, what is public is bad, what is private is good, if that's what you believe.

Senator Kerry sponsored, I think, two of the only environmental pieces, except the California desert bill, that passed the Congress last year, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and another piece of legislation. We thank you for that.

See, I just don't believe that. And Republicans used not to believe that. Richard Nixon signed the law creating the Environmental Protection Act. Richard Nixon signed the first Clean Water Act. Teddy Roosevelt was the first and perhaps still the greatest of all environmental Presidents. There were only 20 head of buffalo left in the entire United States when Teddy Roosevelt set aside the buffalo preserve out West. If you ever go out there, you ought to go see it. It's a big deal. And it's stood for all kinds of other values.

And when I was a boy growing up in the woods and in my little national park in my hometown, I was really grateful to Teddy Roosevelt. And I always thought that using the power of the Government to protect our natural heritage was not really a partisan deal, it was something we had all agreed upon that we had to do, because all of our

short-term impulses sometimes have to be subordinated to the long-term good of the United States, all of them, all of them do. So that's why I'm still here.

If you believe that the market always solves all problems and therefore the Government messes it up, it's understandable why you'd be against raising the minimum wage. But to me, this country's done pretty well in the 20th century, raising the minimum wage on a pretty regular basis, and now if we don't raise it this year, it's going to be at the lowest level in 40 years next year. And I'm telling you—we always talk about how we want to reform welfare and people ought to go to work—let me tell you something, folks, there are thousands, tens of thousands of people that get up in this country every day—in fact, a few million—and go to work for the minimum wage. And a lot of them are the sole support of their children.

What kind of courage does that take? Who can live on that? And they get up, and they show up for work every day, and they work for their minimum wage. And they trudge home, and very often they live in a place that's hard to live in, and their kids are exposed to problems that most of our children aren't. And they always pay their taxes, and they never break the law, and they just do the best they can. They are real American heroes. I think we ought to raise the minimum wage. I think that's the right thing to do.

So that's why I'm proud to be a Democrat. We could lose every election in the country, and I'd still be right there, because I couldn't get over that. I could never get over that. And I say that not to be critical of other folks who really have different views but just to tell you that I feel very fortunate just to be able to stand here tonight. And I'm the first person in my family that ever got a college education. I had student loans, and I paid them back, but I needed them badly. And I always thought it was our job to go up or down together.

And one of the things that has struck me so much in the last two months—they've been pretty difficult, emotional months for America, and they're sort of bracketed—if I will just take the last 6 or 7 weeks, by our national heartbreak in Oklahoma City and

our national exultation at this remarkable young Air Force captain who kept himself alive for 6 days, when people were all around him, and I mean literally all around him, with guns in their hand, wanting at least to imprison him and probably to kill him. And we get together at times like this and we feel, even in the midst of tragedy, better about ourselves because we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We really feel like we're Americans again. And I guess the reason I still belong to this party is, I think we ought to feel like we're Americans again every day. I think we ought to be working together every day.

And I want you to think about this one issue to illustrate it. It relates to Senator Kerry. There are a lot of things I like about John Kerry. I like the use—and I mean this is a positive way—I like the use that he has made of his experience in the war in Vietnam, which was the seminal experience of our generation. I like what it has done to his sense of conscience, his sense of responsibility, his sense of reaching out even to Vietnam. I like the fact that it has made him feel a much greater sense of accountability for power. Once you see power exercised in a way that you think is unaccountable, that is erroneous, and you can't change it quick enough to save people that you're trying to save, it makes you interested in things like what we did with Mr. Noriega or what the BCCI issue was all about or what the S&L bailout turned out to be. It makes you interested in accountability, and I like that.

I like the fact that he's kind of like me, he's interested in all of these technology, future-oriented issues and basically has a rosy view of tomorrow. But the thing I really like is that he cares, still, as a United States Senator, about the issue that still has the capacity to tear the heart out of this country, which is the rising tide of violence among young people.

Let me tell you that the crime rate is going down in almost every major city in America. It's a cause for celebration. It's a tribute to enlightened leadership. It's a tribute to the police forces of this country. It means that our crime bill strategy, which Senator Kennedy and Senator Kerry worked hard for, was the right one to put more police officers on

the street and to emphasize prevention as well as punishment. It means all that.

But in spite of all of that, underneath all of those numbers, there is an almost astonishing rising tide of random violence among children. And I'll tell you this one story, from my hometown, Little Rock, Arkansas. Just a few days ago—I get the local hometown paper, and I try to read it, it kind of keeps me rooted—and there is this remarkable story. And I only saw the top—I saw this beautiful picture of this schoolchild, and these little questions this child had answered in the picture—big color picture—“if I could do anything, I would have people be nice to each other.” “I wish people”—blank, you know, it was one of those fill-in-the-blanks things. “I wish people wouldn't ever join gangs.” “I want to live a long time.” “When I grow up, I want to be a police officer.”

I got to laughing, and then I looked at the headline and the whole thing, and this child whose picture was here in the corner with this—“this is what I want to do, and I want people to be nice and no gangs, no violence”—this child and a brother and a sister, the three of them, young children, 10, 12, and 14, as I remember, were lined up and assassinated, assassinated by, apparently, three young men, only one of them using a weapon, because they had an older sister or half-sister who allegedly was involved in the death of one of these other people's siblings. So their idea of retribution was to go wipe these kids out.

And I'm not trying to get you down about this, but what I'm trying to do is to say to you that a lot of this political rhetoric that we engage in is very divorced from reality. And this country is in a strange position now, because I'm telling you, I still think we're in the best position for the future of any major country in the world: We have the strongest economy, the most vital business sector; we are well-connected with the rest of the world; we're the most ethnically diverse. Everything is great. But underneath this, we've got these kids that literally are so disconnected, so numb, so unreachable, that they are killing each other almost without remorse, and really believing that nobody loves them and what difference does it make, and

if they live to be over 21, it will be more than they expect.

This Nation cannot tolerate that. And the only way we will ever turn it around is to reexamine every single thing we are doing, yes, and be willing to change it if necessary. But we also have to make a commitment that somehow we're going to do, on a national basis, what the mayor here is trying to do with this youth council. Because all these kids start out as good kids. You know, when they're 6 months old, they haven't decided that they're going to grow up and wipe somebody out. And things happen that make them unable to imagine the life that we take for granted.

You know that wonderful line from Yeats, "Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart." We have a lot of kids whose hearts turned to stone. Now, I don't pretend for a moment that if John Kerry and I win reelection in 1996 that by 1998, on July the 16th, every teenager in this country will all of a sudden turn into an eagle scout, and no one will ever pick up a gun or a knife. But I do think it makes a difference. I do believe it makes a difference whether the people who hold public office imagine that they must make connections with people that are different from themselves and feel that we have a collective responsibility not only to seize our opportunities but also to beat back our problems.

I say this again not to depress you, because I believe that our Nation is in the best position of any country to seize the opportunities of the 21st century but only—only—if we understand that every single opportunity in this chaotic and fast-changing world has within it the seeds of destruction.

And this is one example: Oh, it's wonderful if you can take advantage of the global economy, but if you can't you're going to be one of the 60 percent of American workers that are working harder today for less money than you were making 10 years ago. It's wonderful if you can hook into the Internet and you're a rural kid somewhere out in the Mountain West and find the whole world at your fingertips. But if you're a paranoid crazy, you can also learn how to make a bomb. It's wonderful that we can move around all over the

world, but it also makes us more vulnerable to terrorism.

Every one of these leads us to the same conclusion. It is folly for us to believe that we can live and function and make the most of our own lives all by ourselves. Whether we like it or not, beyond our families, we have work, we have communities, we have States, and we are part of a country.

Near the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln said, "We cannot be enemies, we must be friends." We conduct our national politics as if we are trying to segment each other into different groups of enemies and demonize our Government as the instrument of our common coming together.

You are here, every one of you, because you know better. So I will say to you in the end, the reason I hope you will work hard to reelect John Kerry is that his life is an example of understanding down to the fiber of his being that we must go forward together, and that every time we lose a child, we lose a part of ourselves. And no, we're not making excuses for other people's irresponsible behavior, no, we're not taking on to ourselves things that we cannot achieve. But we do understand that in this imperfect world, the thing that makes America great is when America is together. We have been divided long enough. We have been distracted long enough. We have demonized each other long enough. There are children out there to be saved and a world to be made, and that is what we intend to do.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William Bulger, president of the Massachusetts Senate; Charles Flaherty, speaker of the Massachusetts House; William Galvin, Massachusetts secretary of the Commonwealth; Joe DeNucci, Massachusetts auditor; and Elaine Shuster, Democratic Party activist.

Remarks to the White House Conference on Small Business

June 12, 1995

The President. Thank you very much. Someone once told me that half of making a small business work was just consistent, un-